

# EOA OR WEST

## LONDON POEMS



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**EOA or West**

**London Poems**



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## **London Poems**

Due to an oversight in my eagerness to advertize to the Planet Earth via the Internet, seeking submissions for the two anthologies I was doing. I began by looking for poetry and short stories written by people who were from or had once lived or visited London and were written in London. As the submissions began arriving and I picked out the two themes, I began receiving poetry written specifically about London locations. I have incorporated the London poems into this anthology and the London stories and prose into the other anthology. I hope you enjoy these poems as much as *Tear The Rust Of Mt Heart Anthology*.

Wayne Ray  
Publisher & Managing Editor

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## **LOUD NIGHT ON ST. JULIEN**

Kathleen Haynes

In the evening, laying in bed,  
early, because I was only five,  
I heard a rattle-banging on the wind  
and I dreamed of what it could be.  
maybe a giant, angry and cantankerous,  
banging his tea mug on his table,  
so that all his dishes rattled around  
like a boisterous game of tiddley-winks,  
or perhaps it was a gigantic skeleton  
shaking its bones in a frantic dance  
to escape the rag and bone man who  
was coming down the street in his wagon,  
or was it God moving His chairs  
to welcome new guests to Heaven?  
I didn't know it was the wooden talking bridge  
at Egerton Street, announcing crossing cars.

## **MY LONDON YEARS**

Kathleen Haynes

Eyes lit up, peeking like a small bird,  
I saw jelly beans in jars  
in the small store on Horton Street.  
begging at two years old,  
for this manna for the young, / six for a penny,  
later two cent boodle bags of candy  
at Buddie s Booth on Ham Road East.  
older, going downtown by bus, alone,  
allowance clutched in change purse,  
joining a crowd milling noisily outside  
the Odeon, for Saturday movie club.  
Roy Rogers, Hopalong Cassidy, Green Hornet  
in cliff-hangers each week,  
titillating us with suspense.  
popcorn flying, with unison screams  
of laughter punctuating cartoons.  
roar, rumble and crash of roller-skating  
at the London Arena on Bathurst Street,  
a Saturday morning thrill strapping  
roller skates on your shoes,  
circling the huge wooden floor  
in time to rhythmic music.  
those owning boot roller-skates not in our class,  
but nothing mattered as long as  
you stayed upright.  
Ealing School, white brick and solid,  
smelling of old orange peels,  
dispensing education despite our hijinx.  
years I spent on St. Julian  
were the best, the worst.  
Ealing and the world not ready for a  
spirited child who balked at discipline.

## **THE 50'S LIFE**

Kathleen Haynes

girls, teenaged girls, ,and young women,  
dressed in a flamboyant  
assortment of coloured cottons,  
ready for work.  
walking through Victoria Park,  
chatting companionably,  
from the rooms or apartments they rent,  
with roommates.  
the punctually melodic bells of St. Paul s  
ring eight-thirty and their strides  
automatically quicken.

giggling girls, and solemn senior stenographers  
head to where they'll congregate  
and chat by the files.  
some are homesick for the towns  
of Southwestern Ontario  
where they go home weekends.  
it's Monday mornings call  
to the polished desks and spotless halls  
of London Life. I was barely seventeen  
when I went there as a file clerk full time.  
for us all, responsibility came early



## THE NICE PEOPLE OF LONDON

Barry Butson

London is packed with nice people.  
I wish the whole world was the same.  
I like nice people,

but cannot stop taking advantage.  
Nice people almost demand ill treatment  
because, if they had a clue about things,  
they would not be nice.

Things - you know, how a man bends  
over a woman, how thieves gather  
early in the darkest morning, how  
our minds perpetrate murder inside cars  
behind smoked safety glass.

Nice people have no tolerance either,  
for they have only gone two inches  
along the yardstick of morality.  
Those who've gone three or more  
they condemn.  
But if the inches are there,  
why not take 'em?

Nice people would never whack  
anyone's bare ass with a stick.  
But maybe a lot of us need  
and want  
a really good whacking

and who's gonna apply it?  
Certainly not them.

## **CLAIM**

Barry Butson

Driving my daughter and her son to the doctor's,  
I pass downtown locales where - as a young man -  
I caroused. Towards them I feel fondly.  
No matter that now I am mere stuffed grizzly;  
I had my days  
as a scholar and scamp,  
seasons of raccoon and adder.

These buildings are proof,  
these students arriving in town  
for a new year of pranks  
are just me & you again.

Memory is a greedy claimant.

## **SWALLOWED BY THE DARK**

Richard Grove

As young lads we would on occasion  
get caught out after dark  
with adventures luring me and brother Peter  
further past Erwin s farm than normal.

The night would swallow  
the narrow worn lane  
leading up to our grey stone house.  
With a gulp it would devour the trees  
that lined it edge  
and gobbled us into fear.

The fence line in the distance  
at the top of the field  
was the first to disappear  
as we galloped homeward  
through growing mist  
rolled over the tall fields of corn.

A silver corona of moonlight  
would slowly appear  
around tall tufts of grass  
that could hardly be seen  
as night emerged.

The new damp darkness devoured  
everything except what was a brave  
hear beat away.

## NEVER KNOWN IT WETTER

Richard Grove

When I was just a young lad  
we had a rainy spring.  
The farmers all said  
they d never known it wetter  
and by gosh it was wet that spring.

Galoshes to the mail box at the end of the lane.  
Galoshes to school every day for weeks.  
Galoshes even into town on post office days.  
The farmers all said  
they d never known it wetter  
and by gosh it was wet that spring.

The sun only showed its face  
when we weren t lookin  
I suspect between rain drops or at night  
when we were sleepin  
though judgin by the incessant drip, drip  
in the attic into a tin pan it even rained then.  
The farmers all said  
they d never known it wetter  
and by gosh it was wet that spring.

It seemed like it rained week after week after week  
My play cloths were wet.  
My school clothes were wet.  
Even my Sunday go to church cloths got wet  
and I got in trouble.

The farmers all said  
they d never known it wetter  
and by gosh it was wet that spring.

The one or two days it didn t rain that spring,  
a silver mist hung in the air all day  
so as you could feel it  
wet on your face as you walked.  
The farmers all said  
they d never known it wetter  
and by gosh it was wet that spring.

By summer it finally stopped rainin  
but then the humidity set in.  
The farmers all said

it was the most humid it had ever been  
and by gosh it was humid that summer.

## **DUTY POST VET**

J. Alvin Speers

I remember London  
in nineteen-fifty two  
At New Westminster DVA Hospital  
I was an airman passing through.

Sent down from Air Force Base Clinton  
When a bronchial pneumonia bout  
Exposed my deviated septum.  
Operation would straighten it out.

The happiest fellow in the ward  
Was a double amputee;  
Veteran of the Second World War,  
A hero indeed was he!

Rain or shine, each day was fine  
In his optimistic point of view.  
His routine never altered  
And he was never blue.

His body ended at his hips,  
But man, his arms were strong.  
Bright and early every morning  
He moved himself along.

Heaving self from bed on waking  
Into wheel chair sitting near,  
Off to washroom for ablutions,  
Grinning, whistling with good cheer.

After breakfast, all decked out  
With regimental tam on head,  
Brass insignia carefully shined  
On said head dress, which was red.

Then he wheeled himself to post  
Near main entrance double doorway  
To wait and greet each one who entered,  
Wishing them a happy day.

He had served his king and country,  
Lost both legs in battle fray,  
Yet maintained most healthy outlook  
Uplifting all met along the way.

Each time I think of London town  
I recall the cheerful vet  
Who was unforgettable inspiration,  
Second to none that I have met.

## **"SLIPPERY"**

Bill & Norma Clare

In Storybook Gardens in London's fair city  
Lived a young sea lion whose nick-name was 'Slippery'.

Around his pool he zoomed and cavorted;  
Flipping and flapping, he flopped and he snorted.

He thrived on attention; he liked to perform,  
Then gracefully bowed for each grand encore!

Now Slippery was truly nobody's fool,  
And one night he leapt right out of his pool.

He waddled on down to the old River Thames,  
Then swam fast and furious around every bend.

He played under bridges, stopping often to rest,  
Where he was heading was anyone's guess!

To the mouth of the Thames, then in Lake St. Clair  
He dodged the huge lake freighters here and there.

Down the Detroit River and into Lake Erie  
To the Ohio rivers he quickly did flee.

When folks tried to catch him the big chase was on,  
And in these deep waters, a new star was born!

He outwitted them all, then came up to peek, Why,  
Slippery was now playing hide-and-go-seek!

With hooks and with nets the crowds did pursue,  
While one sheriff hurled out his great big lasso!  
This sea lion pup of international fame  
Discovered that this was a great fun-filled game!

Slippery ducked under waves, then sped far away,  
Keeping his would-be owners at bay.

At night he hid in the dark shoreline reeds,  
Giggling and whispering, "You'll never catch me!"  
But one day in a boathouse, he fell sound asleep,  
And succumbed to his captors without e'en a peep!

He was packed in a crate, this infamous clown,  
Down the highway his motorcade headed for home.

In cities and villages folks cheered him on,



As "The Slippery Procession" moved slowly along.

With welcoming signs and a momentous parade  
London welcomed him home one bright summer day!

There in his pool, he put on his old act,  
For this marathon swimmer was thrilled to be back!

He flipped through his shows and flopped down his slide,  
As a chorus of cheering arose nation-wide!

## **LONDON POEMS:**

James Deahl

### **OCTOBER SUNDAY AT THE COVE**

I

Maple and oak stain the water red;  
I watch their colour shift  
around the still surfaces of stones  
where a dry creek enters the cove.

II

All afternoon things happen around me:  
small animals I can never see  
root in fallen leaves; fish leap  
from their dark homes below.

III

I do nothing but sit quietly  
while hidden lives rise  
and fall about me. The heron  
has yet to follow the kingfishers south.

IV

We must meet hidden travellers  
wherever we journey. The cove is dead calm.  
From within God's blue silence  
an osprey's piercing call.

## A WINTER'S DAY

### I

Ice crystals ghost across  
sheets of frozen water.  
Snow fills the little baskets  
of Queen Anne's Lace  
with blue silence.

Darkness resides  
among bare branches.  
The familiar birds  
stay in the brush, remain  
deep in their animal solitude.

Everywhere sons wait  
for the cup to pass.  
The fathers have grown old,  
they silently gather at the river  
of grief, at the river of hope.

### II

Winter bulls stamp sullenly  
within the lee of stone barns.  
Frozen drifts sweep like  
a white sea across road  
and pasture.

I boil water for tea,  
look into the west  
as if expecting deliverance.  
I wait for snow to melt,  
for rivers to freshen.

Downstream, chains of great cities  
loom out of farmland.  
Men in black stand  
at the gates of empire  
like convicts awaiting darkness.

### III

Our sun flames down wrapped  
by winter colours;  
darkness gathers along  
a frozen river  
as the evening star comes.

Beneath its skin of ice  
the Thames flows to Lake St. Clair  
where another, deeper river  
carries the cold of the North  
faithfully, without regret.

There can be no salvation  
through deeds alone.  
The creek lies buried  
when winter purifies  
the ravine with white hands.

## **TANGLEWOOD ORCHARD**

James Deahl

After weeks of dry weather  
snow builds its white house  
in the summer bower.

### **II**

Far to the west, quicksilver clouds  
blot out our distant sun;  
the last leaves rattle their bare trees.

### **III**

Cardinal and blue jay  
decorate scrub and hedgerow  
the only colour to touch the woods this season.

### **IV**

I cast out crusts for birds and rodents.  
Dark smoke rises into the sunset;  
I open the door to the winter.

### **V**

All night going home  
the wind carries bits of light  
into morning's bright hive.

## **OUTSIDE QUEEN STREET VICTORIAN HOME**

Bea O'Donnell

Porch face of the old Victorian home  
Is scored like lady's cake or gingerbread.  
Veil's diadem carved into her forehead  
Now, cutting tool's rusting on the front lawn.  
Curtains over front, twelve-paned windows drawn  
Skirts pulled up close, held out of the laneway.

Side turrets gripped close, like sceptres in fists  
Hollow silos hold buffets and linen.  
Where bone china and laces were shown in  
Before unpaid staff's towel was thrown in  
Frail bird cage of spindled front verandah  
Which fashionable finches'd once flown in.

Top front facade now decapitated  
So primped; lady-like, wooden tendrils grace  
Trifoil gables' windows round, powdered face  
Sad, bonneted by its segmented ruffle.  
At the back a grey cinderblock bustle,  
Laneway medallions glint off intruders.

## **GRAND OLD HOME QUEEN STREET**

Bea O'Donnell

Home's phials kept topped up with prestige  
Ball finial cap turret flask pairs  
Pendules like princess's ornaments.  
Newel urns crowning the stairs.

An institution since 1850  
Innermost rooms, no windows to outside  
Interior control, stronger than the seasons  
Treading years on years of carpet runs.

Coronna circling round windows.  
Each smooth brick king pin shaped .  
And dentelle line of demarcation  
Tailored, cinched tight between upstairs  
And less private ground floor of common man's station

Airs exhaled through upper eaves' soffit  
Front wrought iron edged, not  
A promenade verandah  
Quoin-patched elbows keep close neighbours at bay  
Low buildings on grounds watch up in awe.

## **VICTORIAN LIBRARY - ELDON HOUSE**

Pat Austin

past parasol and canes in an elephant leg  
off darkened hall  
the room itself  
where the curious look from a distance  
at pictures of ancient Rome,  
seashell gleam of china,  
and dusty books stacked thick

no one can inspect  
the blackcold fireplace  
    framed by old Dutch tiles,  
sit on fragile chairs  
or write with quill at spindly desk;  
the rope curves firmly against intruders  
    from the present  
- this room is waiting for phantoms  
    from the past



**REMBRANCE DAY PLUS TWO (1994)**

Pat Austin

Sunday . . .

Centennial Hall

Gilbert and Sullivan music is a pleasant  
presentation  
though I keep thinking of the ceremony Friday  
for all those dead . . .

Intermission . . .

(in Victoria Park)

but where did all the poppies go?  
last leaves flutter in a kind of mist  
and the green statue soldier  
stands astride, looks west.  
A few walkers scurry past  
not looking up . . .

suddenly, a friend who came from the Isles  
some years ago,  
hurries out the other door  
restrains tears  
stands and gazes across the street

## **VICTORIA PARK**

Barbara Phillips

lights raise diaphanous garlands  
on trees evening sentinels on guard  
in winter darkness smooth as velvet  
over the rink moon cool light follows  
skaters some are lovers holding hands  
on the smoothest journey  
they will ever take together  
getting in the way are children  
they sprawl in all directions  
as feet in new skates reject balance  
laughter and shrieks bounce off snowbanks  
later mists settle among forgotten mittens  
snow rich cocoons pillow dreams  
somewhere near Victoria smiles

## **MCMANUS THEATRE**

Barbara Phillips

children squirm in line  
when will they let us in  
why are we standing here  
ushers keep order at the doors  
washrooms are well attended  
under the Grand a hush of excitement  
bounces off echo lit walls  
when it's time a scramble for seats  
snowsuits get tangled in scarves  
as the lights dim faces are tuned  
to the stage someone tumbles into an aisle  
there is a swift reprimand in off stage  
whispers actors  
dressed in primary colours  
project unworldly voices to tell  
the story young eyes stare  
small hands point  
what's he doing mom  
what did he say  
questions fall like polka dots  
parents' answers become torn umbrellas

**Anna** Fleet also shares a passion for London, Ontario, as it was her home for four years while also shares a passion for her BA degree in honors English at the University of Western Ontario for her BA degree in honors English at the University of Western Ontario. Anna currently resides in Cambridge, Ontario where she is the Associate Editor for *Florida Travel Magazine*. In the past she was a Researcher/Reporter at *TV Guide* and she has also written for *Homemakers*, *Homemaker* web site.

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